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ABSTRACT

The School Library Media Services Division of the Pennsylvania Department of Education administered the operation of AdvancE as Pennsylvania's adult education clearinghouse. The goal of the project was to provide Pennsylvania's adult educators with prompt access to information and resources to help them implement the most effective administrative and instructional practices. To support this goal, AdvancE managed and provided resources from a specialized collection of materials. The target audience for the service was the Bureau of Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE), and its funded programs: Adult Education Act Section 321 and 353 programs and Pennsylvania's Act 143 programs. Clients served included state staff, administrators, teachers, volunteers, counselors researchers, and graduate students. During the period July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, AdvancE added 850 publications to the collection. During this time, the program also responded to 937 requests for searches, locating information in online databases and by providing an information and referral service. AdvancE was able to remain within its goal of a 4-day turnaround; users reported that they were very pleased with the service. AdvancE also compiled, published, and distributed the abstracts of the Section 353 projects funded in Pennsylvania during FY 1991-92. To respond to demand, AdvancE reproduced and disseminated copies of three products: "A Field Guide to Literacy," "Where Are the Fathers in Family Literacy?" and "Literacy and You." Evaluation of the program concluded that it had successfully fulfilled its mission but that it could be improved by increased staffing and space. (KC)

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ADVANCE: THE ADULT EDUCATION CLEARINGHOUSE

Final Report

July 1, 1991 - June 30, 1992

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ABSTRACT

AdvancE: The Adult Education Clearinghouse

The School Library Media Services Division of the Commonwealth Libraries, Pennsylvania Department of Education, administered the operation of AdvancE as Pennsylvania's Adult Education Clearinghouse. The goal of the project was to provide Pennsylvania's adult educators with prompt access to information and resources to help them implement the most effective administrative and instructional practices. To support the goal, AdvancE managed and provided resources from a specialized collection of materials, provided on-line database searching services, and disseminated information about new materials.

The target audience for the service was the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) and its funded programs: Adult Education Act Section 321 and 353 programs and Pennsylvania's Act 143 programs. Clients served included state staff, administrators, teachers, volunteers, counselors, researchers, and graduate students.

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education has a long history of supporting the staff development and instructional needs of personnel in its funded programs. In the 1970s it established a clearinghouse at Millersville University. In 1984 that service was brought into the Department of Education as part of the services offered by the Department's Resource Center. Since then, Commonwealth Libraries has worked closely with the ABLE Bureau to build a collection of resources responsive to local program needs, to increase awareness of available services, and to make those services as accessible as possible.

This particular report covers the period July 1, 1991 through June 30, 1992. Project activities were carried out by Evelyn Werner, Project Director, and Cheryl Harmon, Adult Education Resource Specialist.

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OBJECTIVES

During FY 1991-92 AdvancE proposed to accomplish the following:

1. Provide search services, including materials and on-line computerized database information, for the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and its funded programs.

2. Manage the collection so that resources are responsive to state staff and local program needs.

3. Serve as the clearinghouse and disseminator of information about 353 projects.

PROCEDURES

Objective 1, Search Services

Under the first objective, AdvancE responded to client needs through the management of a collection of resources, through the application of appropriate search strategies to locate information in on-line databases, and by providing a strong information and referral service. Client requests were negotiated, database searches were conducted, appropriate shelf materials were selected, and resources were mailed to clients as a routine part of the service.

During FY 1991-92, AdvancE responded to a total 937 requests. A statistical analysis revealed that requests were filled in an average turnaround time of 3.8 days. As has been stated previously, the ability to provide a prompt response is crucial to the success of the AdvancE service. Teachers and administrators need prompt access to information for it to be useful. We are pleased that AdvancE was able to remain within its goal of a four-day turnaround.

Objective 2, Manage Collection

AdvancE made an effort to add a wide range of titles to the collection through direct purchase and through the generosity of publishers of adult education materials. Of the items purchased, some titles were suggested by state and local staff, some were identified by professional reading, and the rest through a variety of other means. In all, 850 publications were added to the collection.

The breakdown of new acquisitions is as follows:

Administration - 15
Reports - 15
Volunteers - 24
Family Literacy - 71
Consumer Education - 3
English - 3
Reading - 348
Social Studies - 34
Special Needs - 11
Counseling - 4
Evaluation - 2
Recruitment, PR - 8
General Reference - 6
Vocational Education - 2
Language Arts - 14

Teacher Education - 39
Curriculum Devel. - 17
Daily Living Skills - 18
GED - 51
Career/Workplace - 31
ESL - 59
Math - 11
Testing - 31
Individualized Inst. - 3
Library Programs - 2
Bibliographies - 4
Grants/Proposals - 1
Technology - 18
Correctional - 1
Science - 1

New Category:
Distance Learning - 3

TOTAL 850

Informally, new resources were discussed with clients by telephone and at meetings and conferences. AdvancE materials were taken to the three Fall Workshops and to the Mid-winter Conference on Adult and Continuing Education. Field visits were also made to: Mayor's Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia, Mid-State Literacy Council in State College, Emporium-Northern Tier Community Action Corporation in Emporium, Greene County Public Library and SCI in Waynesburg.

A committee of three was convened to examine the present state of the collection in the areas of fund raising, organizational planning, volunteer management, staff development and reading materials. Review of the collection resulted in the purchase of 46 new titles and the purchase of additional copies of 15 titles currently part of the AdvancE collection. The committee was composed of a representative from Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth, a council administrator, and a reading specialist.

Objective 3, Dissemination

AdvancE compiled, published, and distributed the abstract book of 353 projects funded in Pennsylvania during FY 1991-92. In addition, AdvancE submitted all FY 1990-91 products and final reports to the U.S. Department of Education as required by federal regulations. Throughout the year Pennsylvania produced products and reports were submitted to ERIC for review and possible inclusion in the ERIC database.

To respond to demand, AdvancE reproduced and disseminated copies of three products - A Field Guide to Literacy, Where Are the Fathers in Family Literacy?, and Literacy and You.

Other Objectives

Throughout the year AdvancE staff participated in a variety of activities in support of the ABLE Bureau and its funded programs. Some of these are listed below.

1. Served as reviewer for the ABLE Bureau in the review of Adult Education Act Section 353 pre-applications and full proposals.

2. Served as a member of the Success Stories Review Committee which selected the outstanding student of the year.

3. Staffed an exhibit and distributed materials at the Mid-winter Conference on Adult Education.

4. Served on the advisory committee for ABLE administrator's development guide.

5. Staffed an exhibit and presented information about AdvancE at four Fall workshops.

6. Attended monthly PAACE meetings as Commissioner of Libraries representative.

8. Attended the National Laubach Literacy Conference.

EVALUATION

Quantitatively, during the year AdvancE provided the following:

Resource Items Loaned	1,620

AdvancE uses an evaluation form that is designed to assess the effectiveness of its and other resource center services. The form is designed to be both brief and convenient in order to encourage a high response rate. Upon return, each form is reviewed and any comments that require follow-up are acted upon immediately.

An analysis of the responses has provided AdvancE with the following data:

	Yes	No
Promptness	100%	0%
Relevancy	100%	0%
Usefulness	100%	0%
Use Again?	100%	0%
Recommend to Others?	100%	0%

When respondents were queried about how they had learned about AdvancE, they identified the following (in descending order):

1. Professional colleague
2. Newsletter
3. State staff
4. Workshops
5. Other (PAACE Conference, libraries, literacy council, etc.)
6. Brochure

From the above response, it appears that word of mouth has become our best means of promoting the service. Recommendation by a professional colleague is a good indication of the quality of service provided and emphasizes the importance of continuing to provide that level of service. Again, the state newsletter, What's the Buzz? and the encouragement of state ABLE advisors have also been invaluable in making potential clients users of the service.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, 1991-92 was a productive year. AdvancE worked closely with various staff of the ABLE Bureau, continued its efforts to keep the ever changing clientele of teachers and tutors in Pennsylvania informed of AdvancE services, and made every effort to provide a responsive service. However, even more could have been accomplished with adequate staffing and space.

The AdvancE resource specialist position was vacated by Annette McAlister on July 1, 1991. The position was vacant until the latter part of January 1992. Services to AdvancE clients were maintained by other Resource Center staff during this seven month period. The clerical position was approved and filled in August 1991. Having the clerical position filled enabled AdvancE to carry out collection development activities to make the collection more accessible.

Lack of space for the collection and for small group sessions also remained a problem. Each year additional materials in the collection must be placed in storage on the second floor because so little space remains in the AdvancE room. The lack of space also precluded offering small group sessions on-site for local program staff to review new materials. Meeting these two needs would go a long way to strengthening AdvancE services.